

# Hope's Camp: Entertainer's legacy still alive at Camp Roberts Museum

by Maj. Stan Zezotarski  
Camp Bob," the nicknames soldiers affectionately bestowed upon Camp Roberts, is the only military camp in America named after Entertainer Bob Hope — so quipped the legendary comedian during his 1952 radio broadcast from Camp Roberts, California.

"It's always a special personal thrill to play at Camp Roberts," opened Bob Hope during his live broadcast from the Camp in 1952. "I've played a lot of Army Camps but this is the only one that they named after me."

More than 10,000 troops were at Camp Roberts at the time conducting basic training and preparing for deployment to Korea—including the California National Guard's 40th Infantry Division (Mechanized). The training conditions at Camp Roberts were harsh, hot, and unforgiving. The scenery included rolling hills, and trees, and plenty of open ground where the torturous sun could pound down on soldiers. But with just one quick quip, Hope made soldiers forget about all of that.

"This camp is located in the

heart of the lettuce country," Hope said. "I haven't seen this much green since (Bing) Crosby dropped his wallet."

Of course Hope touched upon the fact that soldiers of the time didn't have much on which to spend their money given life at Camp Roberts, which was a traditionally male-orientated installation in 1952.

"While they are in basic training, these guys are supposed to forget completely about girls," Hope joked. "These guys must not even think about girls. In fact every night the MPs go through the barracks with a flashlight and wakes up anybody that has a smile on his face."

The legendary entertainer was at Camp Roberts with special guest Actress Jane Russell, promoting their recently released movie, "Son of Paleface." Hope and Russell played the lead characters. Hope, portraying Junior Potter, who returns to claim his father's gold. Russell leads a gang of thieves, and Roy Rogers portrays a federal marshal hunting for Russell's gang. Hope and Russell performed radio spoofs on the movie and on attending the premier, "Son of Paleface."

Hope's self-defacing humor

## The California National Guard thanks Bob Hope for the memories

generated an enormous response from the crowd of soldiers. But his ability to appeal to soldiers' lifestyles and sense of humor won their admiration and respect. It was no different at Camp Roberts. Hope joked that Camp Roberts was undergoing renovation at the time — especially the mess halls.

"They now have garbage disposals in every mess hall," Hope wisecracked. "They're known as KPs."

He related to the soldiers' love of sports at the Camp.

"They have a wonderful athletic program here," he said while setting his audience up for the quick one liner. "A guy here set a new world record for the 100 yard dash — He backed into a bayonet."

The entertainer's visits to Camp Roberts, Camp San Luis Obispo, and March Base in Riverside are well documented. Hope enjoyed his reception at all three facilities.

Hope's agent recently revealed that



Bob Hope memorial display at camp roberts historical museum

the beloved entertainer was so appreciative of his response at Riverside — now March Air Reserve Base and home of the California Air National Guard's 163rd Air Refueling Wing—that it inspired a multi-decade, multi-war global tour entertaining troops.

Author and radio talk show host Spencer Leigh recently claimed, however, that Camp Roberts also inspired the entertainer.

"In 1941, Bob Hope entertained soldiers at Camp Roberts and he was so exhilarated by his reception that he became a compulsive entertainer for the forces, first in the Second World War, then in Korea and Vietnam, and finally in the Gulf," Spencer wrote.

Hope's generosity for lifting troop morale was not lost upon the California National Guard. In a special dinner sponsored by The National Guard Association of California on December 10, 1980 at the Sheraton Universal Hotel in Los

Angeles, entertainers and military personnel thanked the King of Comedy in person for his service. The 40th Infantry Division (M) Band, and the 146th Tactical Airlift Wing's 562nd Band provided music for an evening in a tribute to a man who lifted the spirit of the American Serviceman.

"Bob Hope's entertainment of GIs is never to be forgotten," wrote Col. Ernest Zuick in the testimonial dinner brochure. "It is doubtful if anyone in the annals of show business ever made a more endearing hit than Hope did when he stepped before American servicemen—lonesome for home—and quipped: 'Hi, fellow tourists.'"

At the same time the public showers accolades upon Hope and echoes his theme song, "Thanks for the Memories," Camp Bob is remembering the star in several ways. Tucked away in a sacred corner of the Camp's museum is a special dedication to Bob Hope—

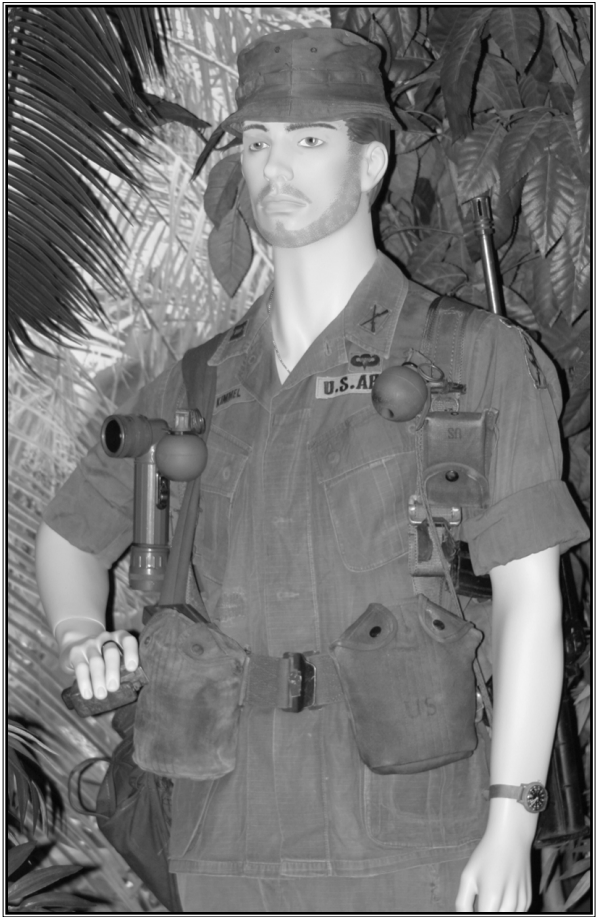
Camp Bob to the Army fans visiting it—with a CD recording of he and Jane Russell's 1952 radio show from the Post.

The CD is available to the public for a \$10 donation to the Camp Roberts Historical Museum, Camp Roberts, California 93451-5000, 805 238-8288.

Military Installation Commanders were authorized discretion whether to lower the American Flag to half mast in honor of Hope. Camp Roberts chose to lower the Post's Flag to half mast in honor of the star on July 27th, but in this case with a fond recollection that Hope once jokingly referred to "Camp Bob" as his personal namesake.

The California National Guard not only thanks the star for the memories, but also for the Hope that future stars will follow his historic footsteps and begin their military entertainment tours through "Camp Bob's" magic gates.

New at the Camp Roberts Historic Museum is a Vietnam War exhibit complete with Lt. Col. Kimmel's uniform and gear. Kimmel distinguished himself during his service in Vietnam as a member of the Special Forces Group (Airborne). This new exhibit features original gear he generously donated to the museum.



# Larry Kimmel retires after 37 years of distinguished service

By Lisa Cooksey  
Captain Larry Kimmel served in America's Secret War, fighting largely in clandestine and covert battles with the Study and Observations Group along the Ho Chi Minh Trail, seeking little fanfare and content to serve his country.

Nearly 37 years later, the Lieutenant Colonel is on the verge of retirement still making large contributions to his state and nation, but again, seeking little fanfare for his service and accomplishments during his career. His latest accomplishments include using his combat and military experience to help shape Camp Roberts training facilities to support programs for soldiers rotating through Operation DESERT SPRING, the federal mission along the Southwest Asia Border, and troops preparing for transfer from Camp Roberts to their mobilization stations elsewhere in the United States.

"Lieutenant Colonel Kimmel has laid a lot of ground work and offered us invaluable insight in posturing Camp Roberts to become a part of a Power Projection Platform," said Camp Roberts Commander Colonel Bill Hatch. "His professionalism speaks for itself, but his modesty overshadows his contributions to the post."

Kimmel's military journey began in 1966, traveled through the Vietnam War, and concluded at Camp Roberts.

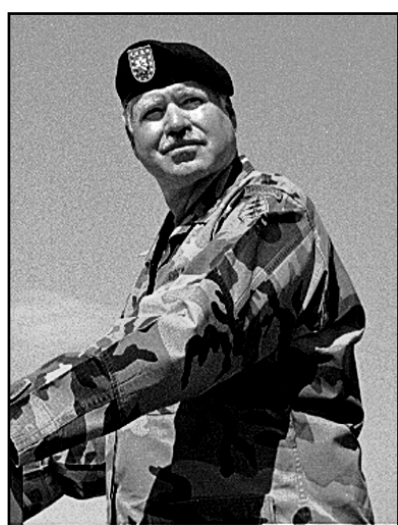
"Ironically, Larry distinguished himself during his service in Vietnam and concludes with a quiet legacy of preparing soldiers for the trials he knows they face during the Global War on Terrorism," said colleague and friend, Colonel Gary Landrith, Chief of Staff for the California Army National Guard. "His quiet dignity deflected the limelight from himself onto the needs of Camp Roberts and the troops that process and train there. He understands tough conditions and how to survive them and knows from experience that the best route out of a tough situation is to improve and change the environment. We are grateful to him."

Born in Palmerton, Pennsylvania, Kimmel's quiet, but colorful, career spanned nearly four decades beginning in September 1966 when he joined the United States Army. The aggressive soldier attended Officer Candidate School at Ft. Benning, Georgia and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant within the year. He qualified for airborne school and was subsequently assigned to the 6th Special Forces Group in 1967. He became fluent in Chinese through the Defense Language Institute West Coast in 1968.

Kimmel was a commander for Detachment A-211 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) in Vietnam in 1969. He was assigned as an Intelligence Officer with the Military Assistance Command

Vietnam Studies and Observation Group in the Republic of Vietnam in October 1971 serving with distinction with an organization that John L. Plaster, author of, SOG: The Secret Wars Of America's Commandos In Vietnam, said "logged a combat record unequaled in U.S. History." Kimmel was also the company commander of Company E, 1st Battalion/6th Infantry Regiment, 23rd Infantry Division while in Vietnam and was later the Liaison Officer to the 1st Republic of Korea Marine Brigade and later the 2nd Division of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam.

After leaving the Army, Kimmel moved out west and eventually settled in Big Bear, California. In October 1983 Captain Kimmel joined the California Army National Guard and was assigned to the 4th Battalion (Mechanized) 160th Infantry in Santa Ana, California. He served in various staff positions with the 160th Infantry Battalion to include Communications-Electronics Officer, Company Commander, S-3 Air, and was promoted to Major as the Battalion S-3. In October 1990 Major Kimmel was assigned to Detachment 2 STARC, Camp San Luis Obispo, California, where he held the position of Director of Plans, Training and Mobilization. Major Kimmel was assigned as the Director of Public Works for Camp Roberts in December of 1993. In August 1994 he was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel. He assumed the position as Camp Commander of Camp San Luis Obispo in January of 1995 and



LARRY KIMMEL

in December 1996 Lieutenant Colonel Kimmel became the Commander at Camp Roberts.

His decorations and awards include the Combat Infantryman Badge, Parachutist Wings, Nationalist Chinese Parachutists Wings, Special Forces Tab, Bronze Star Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, Joint Service Commendation Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Army Achievement Medal, Army Reserve Component Achievement Medal, Overseas Ribbon, National Defense Service Medal with Bronze Star, Army Service Medal, Vietnam Campaign medal with six Campaigns, Vietnam Service Medal with 60 device, Reserve Component Overseas Ribbon with four device, California Medal of Merit, California Commendation Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, State Active Duty Ribbon, Drill Attendance Ribbon, Presidential Unit Citation, Republic of Vietnam Cross of Lantry, Meritorious Unit Commendation Medal, Republic of Vietnam Civil Actions Unit Citation Award, and the California Outstanding Unit Award with Oak Leaf Cluster.

Although he says he will sincerely miss the North County community, and especially his friends at Camp Roberts, he and his wife, Sheri, look forward to relocating to Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, where he plans to spend a little time shoveling snow and a lot of time on the golf course.

Camp Roberts won't forget him anytime soon. They've made sure of that with a new Vietnam War Exhibit in the Camp Roberts Historical Museum, complete with Kimmel's uniform and gear. "You might say we've memorialized him, although that does sound a little morbid," said Lisa Cooksey of the Public Affairs Office.

To All of Our Area Veterans, Past & Present,  
*Thank You For Your Service,  
to Insure Our Freedom!*

**Robinson's**  
ORNAMENTAL IRON  
Paso Robes, 239-2995

**La Bella Pizza**  
Fresh hand tossed dough everyday!

FREE DELIVERY!  
7 Days a Week, 9am to 11pm

**237-7779**  
155 Niblick Rd., Paso Robles  
Albertson's Plaza

**CARRY OUT SPECIAL**  
12" Small .....\$4.99 + tax  
14" Medium .....\$5.99 + tax  
16" Large .....\$7.99 + tax  
18" X Large .....\$9.99 + tax  
20" XX Large .....\$11.99 + tax

**FAM ILY SPECIAL**  
\$27.99 + tax  
16" Large Special PLUS  
16" Large One Topping AND Salad,  
Buffalo Wings "12" AND a 2 Litre Soda

**PIZZA PARTY**  
\$24.99 + tax  
18" X Large Special AND Buffalo Wings "12"  
AND Breadsticks AND Soda

**GOURMET PIZZA**  
Small Medium Large XLarge XXLarge  
\$8.99 \$11.99 \$15.99 \$17.99 \$19.99  
Choose From: Marinated Chicken, Bacon, Canadian  
Bacon, Ground Beef, Salami, Sausage, Pepperoni  
Green Onions, Onions, Mushrooms, Tomatoes, Bell  
Peppers, Spinach, Shrimp, Anchovies, Feta Cheese,  
Roasted Garlic, Pesto Sauce, BBQ Sauce, Sun Dried  
Tomatoes, Olive Oil, Zucchini, Artichoke

*We are grateful for all those who have fought  
that we might be free!*

*Thank you to all of our area veterans, past & present!*

**Ferravanti**  
**GRADING & PAVING**  
395 Hunter Place, Paso Robles 238-9560